



Center for Children with Disabilities

9772 Diagonal Road
Mantua, Ohio 44255

(330) 274-2272 | (800) 233-8611
www.hattielarlham.org

**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
Senate Medicaid Committee**

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and esteemed committee members,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Dianna Miller and I am the Program Director of Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities, and we are located in Mantua, Ohio in Portage County. Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities' Main Campus is an intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities providing residential services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 300 staff members is proud to provide residential services to 120 Ohioans with profound to severe intellectual disabilities. While our facility is in Portage County, our residents come from all over the State of Ohio.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and very appreciative of the additional investments adopted by the House of Representatives in House Bill 33.

The struggle to obtain adequate staffing has had a negative effect on our ability to provide needed services. For the first time in my twenty-year tenure at Hattie Larlham, the facility has put a hold on new admissions and has stopped providing short term respite care due to staffing shortages. We have many open direct support professional openings. More than at any other time. Being a direct support professional means being responsible for the health and welfare of a more vulnerable human being which is no small task. Considering you can work at McDonalds for a similar wage, it is hard to compete for employees. The inability to attract new staff has put unbelievable pressure on the staff who we have managed to retain. We are constantly at risk for losing our more seasoned staff due to the additional duties and hours they take on to cover open positions.

Our main campus serves those who function in the severe to profound range of intellectual disabilities, are non-ambulatory, and are medically fragile. They require 24-hour nursing and support for all of their care needs. This type of care is very difficult to provide at home indefinitely. In my experience, family and loved ones pursue residential services for their children when they must not because they want to. While the specific situations vary, it comes down to the fact that the care needs



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outweigh the resources of the family or caregiver. It is difficult for a family to come to the decision to pursue a long-term placement which makes it that much harder to have to tell them that we are not in a position to help and that they will be at the bottom of a long waiting list. As services elsewhere in the community are also scaled back, there is often nowhere for these families to turn.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities. We encourage this committee to support the House's version of H.B. 33 as it pertains to DODD appropriations. Further, we encourage the Senate to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.

Dianna Miller, MSSA, LSW
dianna.bluso@hattielarlham.org
10238 Clipper Cove
Aurora, Ohio 44202
440-715-5320